Master Sunshine

Mrs. C. F. Fraser

FT MEADE
GenColl

PZ
7
.F86
M

2nd COPY DELIVERED TO THE
MAY 13 1898
Library of Congress.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. PZ7 Copyright No.

Shelf F86M

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

SUNSHINE LIBRARY.

THE BLIND BROTHER.
By Homer Greene $0.50

THE CAPTAIN'S DOG.
By Louis Énault 50

DEAR LITTLE MARCHIONESS.
The Story of a Child's Faith and Love 50

DICK IN THE DESERT.
By James Otis 50

THE GOLD THREAD.
By Norman McLeod, D.D. 50

HOW TOMMY SAVED THE BARN.
By James Otis 50

J. COLE.
By Emma Gellibrand. 50

JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER.
By Hesba Stretton 50

LADDIE.
By the Author of "Miss Toosey's Mission". 50

LITTLE PETER.
By Lucas Malet 50

MASTER SUNSHINE.
By Mrs. C. F. Fraser 50

MISS TOOSEY'S MISSION.
By the Author of "Laddie" 50

MUSICAL JOURNEY OF DOROTHY AND DELIA.
By Bradley Gilman 50

A SHORT CRUISE.
By James Otis 50

THE WRECK OF THE CIRCUS.
By James Otis 50

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY,
NEW YORK AND BOSTON.

"At last Tim balanced himself for a Whole Half-Minute." — Page 23.

MASTER SUNSHINE

BY

MRS. C. F. FRASER

NEW YORK: 46 EAST 14TH STREET

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY

BOSTON: 100 PURCHASE STREET

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
OFFICE OF
MAY 4 1898
Register of Copyrights.

2nd COPY,
1898.

TWO COPIES RECEIVED.
27952

P27
.F86
M

6663

COPYRIGHT, 1898,
BY THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY.

12-32406

C. J. PETERS & SON, TYPOGRAPHERS,
BOSTON.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Who He Was	1
II.	The Wanderer and His Wife	9
III.	The Rainy Day	17
IV.	A Sunday with Father	25
V.	Being a Hero	31
VI.	Kind Deeds	39
VII.	A Happy Ending	47

MASTER SUNSHINE.

CHAPTER I.

WHO HE WAS.

OF course his real name was not Master Sunshine.

Who ever heard of a boy with a name like that?

But his mother said that long before he could speak he chose the name for himself, for even as a baby he was full of a cheery good humor that was always sparkling out in his winning smiles and his rippling laugh. He was a good-natured, happy child from the time that he could toddle about; and he was very young when he began to give pleasure to his friends by serving them in all the little ways within his power.

The very golden curls that topped his small head glistened as if they had caught and imprisoned the glory of the morning sun; and it really

did seem as if a better name could not be found for the merry, helpful little fellow than Master Sunshine.

His real name was a very different affair — Frederick Alexander Norton — and his boy friends called him Freddy for short. His little sister Lucy called him "buzzer" and Suns'ine; and Almira Jane, the help, who made the brownest and crispest of molasses cookies, and the most delicious twisted doughnuts, said he was a "swate angel of light," except at such times as she called him a "rascalpion."

Master Sunshine never stopped to argue with Almira Jane when she called him a "rascalpion." He knew that this was a plain sign that she was getting "nervous;" and when Almira Jane was nervous, it was always best for small boys to be out of the way.

A little later, when the kitchen floor had been scrubbed, and the stove polished like a shiny black mirror, and the bread-dough had been kneaded and set to rise, he knew he would be a welcome visitor again.

Perhaps that was one of the many reasons why people loved him so. He was always considerate. He had the good sense not to keep on ask-

ing questions and offering help when it was best to go quietly away. Somehow he always felt sure that his turn would come presently, and that Almira Jane would be sorry she had called him such a hard name, and would be only too pleased to have him look over the beans for the bean-pot, and fill the wood-box, and do all the other little kitchen chores that he delighted in.

There were sure to be pleasant times after one of Almira Jane's nervous attacks. When she was quite over her flurry and worry, Daisy, the Maltese cat, would crawl out of her hiding-place under the stove, and arch her tail, and purr contentedly as she rubbed her long, graceful body against the table-legs; while Gyp, the pet dog, would hurry in from the dog-house under the shade of the orchard-trees, and jump on Almira Jane's shoulder, and she would be as pleased as possible over his knowing ways. At such times Master Sunshine was very fond of Almira Jane.

He loved Lucy with a steady affection, too, though she pulled his curls sometimes until he fairly expected to lose the whole of his golden locks. She needed a great deal of patient amusement, too, and she was not very considerate of his belongings.

One day he was very angry, and his hand was lifted in anger against her.

The trouble was that she had torn in two his favorite picture of elephants in his animal book. The little girl was quite unaware of the mischief her chubby fingers had wrought, but she knew very well by the look of Master Sunshine's overcast face that in some way she had displeased him.

So, pursing up her lips in a smile not unlike his own sunshiny one, she lisped, in funny imitation of her mother, —

"Never mind, Suns'ine, little sister's sorry;" and, strange to say, at her words the angry passion left him, and tears of shame stood in his blue eyes.

"Of course," he said afterwards, in telling the story to his mother, "I know that Lucy didn't know the sense of what she was saying, but she did seem to know how to get at the *sensibliness* of me. Just imagine, mother, how bad we would all have felt if I had struck my own dear sister that God sent us to take care of!"

And that was so like Master Sunshine. He never willingly gave pain to any living creature; and although he was sometimes careless and for-

getful, just like other boys, yet he was never known to be wilfully unkind.

He loved his mother very dearly too, and perhaps it was from her gentle ways that he had learned to be so thoughtful for others. He told her all his joys, and all his secrets save one; and he dearly loved the bedtime hour, when she read to him the stories that he most admired, — stories of brave deeds were the kind he was always asking for. But neither of them ever dreamed that the quiet bedtime hours were teaching him to be a hero.

It did not seem possible that an eight-year-old boy could be a hero such as one reads of in books.

Of course, he was going to do great things when he was a man. He meant to make a great fortune, of which half was to be his mother's; and if she chose to spend it on churches and missionaries and schools, so much the better.

He was sure she would rather do this than buy herself handsome dresses and diamond rings and ruby necklaces; and he was quite certain that, when she wore her gray gown and her gray bonnet, with the purple violets tucked under the brim, that she was the most beautiful lady in the world.

His own share of the fortune he planned to spend in many ways. He promised himself, among other things, that he would put up a fountain in the village, where tired people and thirsty horses and cows and dogs and birds would come for a drink. "I'd have a text on it too," he would say, with his eyes shining with excitement. "It should be, 'I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink.'" And of course 'I' would mean the Lord; for the Bible tells us how kind he was to all helpless things, and I think he would be pleased to have all the animals tended to as well as the thirsty people. I wish I could be a man now, and they would not have to go thirsty any longer."

He often told Almira Jane about the fountain too; and she always said that it was a capital idea.

But it was to his father only that he told his secret.

It was a queer secret, and a very real trouble, too, I can tell you.

Part of it was that Master Sunshine was just the least bit bow-legged.

Of course there could not be much of a secret about that. Lots of people knew it quite well.

In fact, if you looked carefully at the well-shaped limbs in the trim blue stockings and neat knickerbockers, you could easily see that the legs curved slightly outwards.

But the real secret — the real heart and soul of the matter — was that being bow-legged was a great, great grief to Master Sunshine. No one but his father ever knew this — not even his mother, or Almira Jane, or Lucy. It was too sore a subject to speak of freely.

It was on the day when he first put on trousers that his troubles began. It seemed to him that people began then to make such odd remarks about him; and the strangest thing of all was that they would seem to quite forget that he heard every word they said, and that they never seemed to understand how they were hurting his feelings.

For a time he solved the difficulty in a clever way. He begged his mother to make him some loose sailor suits with long bagging legs.

They served their purpose well, and so long as they lasted no one ever spoke of the tender subject that he wished to avoid. But still he never felt comfortable about them in his mind.

It seemed such a cowardly thing to hide his

legs like that, and he did so want to be manly in all his ways.

So, after a long talk one day with his father, as they sauntered hand in hand down a shady country road, with Gyp sporting and playing alongside, he decided to face the trouble bravely, and wear knickerbockers like other boys of his age. And, instead of sulking or fretting about what he could not help, he set himself to making allowances for other people.

"Father says that every one has his trials," he would say to himself sagely; "and I dare say that most folks have worse trials than mine. So when Almira Jane is 'nervous,' and Lucy is fretful, or mother has her bad headaches, I must just remember to be 'specially good to them. Maybe, after all, bow-leggedness isn't the worst thing to put up with."

CHAPTER II.

THE WANDERER AND HIS WIFE.

MASTER SUNSHINE was such a busy boy. Sometimes it seemed to him that the reason he did not get into as much mischief as other boys of his age was because he really had no time in which to be idle.

There was school each day, to begin with, and lessons to be prepared, and story-books to read, and the flower-garden to be cared for, and Gyp to teach new tricks to, and the pets to be tended and looked after, — in fact, there were more things than I can tell you of always waiting to be done.

It was nearly one boy's work, for instance, to take care of the Guinea fowls, — the handsome, mottled hens, that never knew when they were well off, but were always running away and getting lost. If it had not been for their shrill, silly cackle, their hiding-places would never have been found. Master Sunshine pursued them every

time they strayed, and brought them home triumphantly. I think he loved his sturdy family of Cochin Chinas best; for the great rooster, with his well-feathered legs and scarlet comb, always seemed to recognize him as a friend, and the plump hens laid the most delicious eggs, the exact hue of their own buff plumage. It was never any trouble to feed and water them, or to let them out of the hen-yard for a short run.

Every one knew that the Wanderer and his Wife were Master Sunshine's property. The Wanderer was a great white gander, with a long neck and a still longer tongue, if one could measure it by the clatter it made in the world. His Wife was a patient gray goose, who waddled after him unceasingly, and was always ready to add her shrill voice to his.

It troubled their young owner not a little that the Wanderer had to wear a great yoke of light wood about his neck; but after the bird had twice run away and trampled the gardens of their neighbors, he could see that it was necessary.

Almira Jane put the matter very clearly before him. "I don't think he does like his collar much, and it ain't really ornamental," said she; "but it is kinder to the neighbors to have him

wear a yoke so that he cannot squeeze between the pickets in the fences to destroy the gardens."

"But the goose may do the same mischief," interrupted Master Sunshine anxiously.

Almira Jane shook her head wisely.

"The poor silly thing will never think of it by herself," she answered. "All she does is to follow her mate; and if we keep him out of trouble, she will be all right, I promise you."

It always made Almira Jane laugh when she thought of the day when Master Sunshine brought the Wanderers home. Master Sunshine had gone to old Mrs. Sorefoot, who lived down the road, to get a setting of Leghorn eggs. The old lady, whose life was being made miserable by the clamor of the pair of geese which a grandchild had brought her the week before as a particularly choice gift, told Master Sunshine that, if he would but take them away, they should be his property.

The little fellow was more delighted than I can tell you. He had always wanted to own geese, and this was such a good chance. And he made up his mind on the instant that as soon as he got them home, he would remove the queer-looking collar from the gander's neck.

Then he set out for home, oh, so proudly!

On one arm he carried carefully the basket of eggs; under the other was the gray goose, with her legs securely tied. Behind him, led, or rather dragged, by a stout cord passed through the opening in the yoke, came the white gander, who was quite able by spreading his powerful wings to contest every step of the way. Poor Master Sunshine! What a time he did have, and how very hot and excited he was before he reached home!

Almira Jane saw him coming, and flew to meet him. Never in her life had she seen such a strange sight. The little fellow set the basket of eggs gently on the ground, laid the struggling goose on her side, and made the Wanderer fast to a fence-post, before he could answer her many questions.

Then he mopped his forehead with his small handkerchief, and drew a deep sigh of relief.

"O Almira Jane! it has been the worst time," he said. "If you'll just look at my stockings, I am afraid you will see that there is lots of darning to be done."

Almira Jane surveyed the calves of his plump legs wonderingly. Sure enough, there were dozens of little round holes through which the pink

skin was showing. There were even little stains of blood on the ravelled yarn.

"The old gander has nipped my legs with his sharp bill, and butted me with his yoke, and pulled on the string so I could scarcely keep my feet. The gray goose has flapped me with her wings whenever she got the chance; and in getting them safely here, I nearly fell a dozen times, and broke the whole setting of eggs," he said excitedly.

Almira Jane looked admiringly at him. "You ain't got much strength, but you got considerable grit," she said proudly.

"But they didn't know how inconvenient it was for me," added the boy more calmly. "When they see how kind we are to them, I think they will be sorry about the way they treated me."

Almira Jane looked at the gander critically, and cut the string that bound the gray goose's legs, before she made any reply.

"They need their wings clipped," she said. "That is the kindest thing we can do for them."

Master Sunshine looked both surprised and grieved.

"You see, Sunshine," she continued, "geese are wild birds still, though generations and generations of our grandfathers tried to tame them,

yet they are not wild enough to look after themselves. When they stray away from their homes they have not wit enough either to find food which is suitable to them, or to hide themselves from dogs or wild animals who delight to worry them; so the best thing we can do is to fit them for the life we want them to lead."

Master Sunshine nodded thoughtfully. He had great faith in Almira Jane's knowledge, and the good sense of her arguments always satisfied his judgment.

It was not until he had gone in the house, and was well out of hearing, that Almira Jane began to laugh; and such a clear, ringing, downright, hearty laugh it was, the old Wanderer bumped his yoke against the fence to show his approval, and the gray goose joined in with high, shrill screams of delight. It really seemed as if they were trying to tell Almira Jane what they thought of their journey along the road with their new master.

There were not many houses near the pretty white cottage in which Master Sunshine lived. The Hill-top school, of which he was a pupil, was quite a half-mile away; and Tommy Dane, who lived just across the street from his home, used to walk there with him every day. Master Sun-

shine was very fond of Tommy, though his little friend had some ways that he did not wholly like.

The only other boy near-by was Billy Butler, a poor, half-witted idiot, who lived with his family in a tiny cottage under the side of a hill. Master Sunshine was very pitiful of Billy's sad lot, and many an apple and slice of bread did he share with him.

Not far away was the beautiful summer house of Mr. Patterson, a city banker. The lawns and flower-beds there were always beautiful to see; and the great house with its many bay windows and broad verandas always seemed like a palace to Master Sunshine. But best of all he loved the great stable where a prancing silver horse was always riding on the weather vane.

It was at the stable that he saw his friend Jacob, who was quite as wonderful in his knowledge of animals as Almira Jane.

It took a great deal of Master Sunshine's time just to repeat Jacob's stories to Almira Jane; and he noticed that whenever he began to tell Jacob about what Almira Jane said — Almira Jane was brought up on a Nova Scotia farm and knew everything about animals — his listener would

stamp on the barn floor to show his approval, and would listen to every word.

The great stable was a very pleasant place these spring days. The horses were all so well groomed, their stalls were all so perfectly clean, and, in the barn beyond, the cows looked round from their place with such friendly eyes, Master Sunshine used to wish that every one in the village would come to admire the place and to talk with Jacob. He was sure that everyone who talked to Jacob would be kind to animals ever after.

CHAPTER III.

THE RAINY DAY.

THE sky was all leaden and overcast when Master Sunshine woke up one morning. The fast-falling rain-drops were so big and so close together that it almost seemed as if some great sky-ocean was pouring down upon the earth. It was too wet for him to go to school, and he had to make up his mind to enjoy a quiet day in-doors.

Almira Jane put on her waterproof and rubbers, and attended to the hens and the geese; and in order to pay her back for doing his work, Master Sunshine polished the silver spoons and forks with whitening, and rubbed them with a chamois-skin until they fairly gleamed. Then after he had tidied up the wood-shed, and cut paper in a fancy pattern for the dresser shelves, he decided that he was a bit tired of doing things, and he curled up in the big crimson arm-chair by the dining-room window with a new story-book.

Presently Lucy's voice arose in a fretful wail.

Master Sunshine, I am sorry to say, shut his ears to her pitiful cry. He was so comfortable and cosey and the story-book was so interesting.

The wail became louder and louder. It was evident that Lucy was on her way down-stairs. In a moment she was in the room by his side, and by this time her wail had grown to a terrified scream.

"O Suns'ine! take zem kitty off!" she begged.

Truly enough his little sister was in great trouble. But a minute before Spry, the kitten, had strayed away from the mother-cat, and Lucy and she had got into mischief already.

Master Sunshine made haste to lift the kitten from Lucy's shoulder, where it had taken refuge; and he was very sorry to see that the sharp claws of the little paws had made their marks on her plump neck.

"Kiss it p'ease, and make it well," begged Lucy tearfully as she climbed on his knee; while the kitten, after looking nervously around, sought refuge in Master Sunshine's coat-pocket.

"Lucy was dwessin' kitty in dollie's clothes, and it went 'spitz!' and runned up her shoulder," wept Lucy.

Master Sunshine kissed the smarting neck, and cuddled the pet in his arms.

"Buzzer will slap kitty for biting sister wiz its finder nails," she begged.

"Brother will show sister how to be kind to kitty," he answered, as he drew the trembling ball of fur from its hiding-place, and stroked it with a tender hand. "Spry is not a dolly, and does not like to wear dollie's clothes. Lucy will rub her under her chin just above the white star on her breast, and she will sing a pretty cat-song to show how happy she is, and brother will show Lucy how to lift kitty by the loose skin about her neck. Lucy must play she is mother-cat whenever she plays with Spry."

And at the prospect of such a new and delightful game Lucy dried her eyes, and called him her "dee, dee Suns'ine."

And then, what do you suppose? Why, she just laid her tear-stained face up against his shoulder, and opened her rosy mouth in a great yawn, and dropped quietly off to sleep.

But Master Sunshine's thoughts were not quite so care-free as Lucy's. "Next time I must be a better brother," he said to himself; and when

his mother came to carry the baby to her crib, he would not let her give him a word of praise. "I am too ashamed to tell you why, mother," he said; "but after this I mean to take better care of my little sister."

The rain kept falling steadily, and after dinner, when mamma had gone to lie down, and Almira Jane was washing up the dishes, Master Sunshine was drumming on the window-pane, and wondering what he should do the whole long afternoon. Just then Tommy Dane came running up towards the house, and behind him scampered a dog, very like Gyp, who, when he heard the familiar bark, put his paws on the window-sill, and wagged his tail with delight; while Daisy, meowing to Spry to follow her, fled hastily up the kitchen stairway.

"Mother said I might bring Tim over and have you teach him tricks this afternoon," announced Tommy, shaking the rain off his coat.

"Tim is not a smart dog, like your Gyp. He does not seem to be able to think. I almost wish I had taken Gyp when I had the chance."

Master Sunshine and Tommy had got their dogs from the same litter of puppies, and Tommy had had the first choice.

"Tim is such a cross, snappy dog," continued Tommy. "He makes me angry every time I try to teach him anything."

"May be it is because you are angry that he is cross and snappy," said Almira Jane, half under her breath.

Of course Master Sunshine was very proud to exhibit Gyp. He loved to have his pet look up at him with trusting brown eyes; and when Gyp sprang on his knee, and put his paws affectionately about his master's neck, it always seemed as if he were not quite a dog, but something very like a dear human friend. Gyp had such winning ways too. He would stand on his hind legs and beg, or he would seat himself on a chair, and hold out a paw to shake hands with, in the most knowing manner; and all of these accomplishments he owed to his little master's patient teaching.

Almira Jane was through washing the dishes now; and as she took the broom in hand to begin sweeping out the kitchen, Tim gave a frightened growl, and fled to the dining-room.

Almira Jane grew very red in the face as she said, "That dog can think well enough, and tell his thoughts too. It is plain to me that some

one has used a broom to ill-treat the poor, helpless creature with."

Almira Jane looked very hard at Tommy as she spoke; but Tommy threw back his head as if he did not much care what she said, and followed his dog into the dining-room. "Let's keep away from that girl," he said coaxingly; "it seems to me she is very interfering."

"She taught me how to teach Gyp," said Master Sunshine politely; "and she is very wise about animals. You'll be fond of her, too, when you understand her ways. She only gets 'nervous,' like she was now, when she is very busy and hurried, or when she thinks people have been unkind. I'm sure she did not mean that you had beaten your Tim with a broom."

Tommy hung his head.

"But I did," he said, almost in a whisper; "he would not shake hands, as I wanted him to, so I took up the broom and gave him a blow with it. I thought no one saw me do it, and I never imagined Tim would tell."

Master Sunshine was very much shocked. He had not believed that his friend would be guilty of such a deed. "Tommy," he said gravely, "if you are unkind to Tim he will never look at

you as if he loved you, and that is the nicest thing about having a dog."

"I got him a pound of raw meat from the butcher's to make up for it," said Tommy, half sulkily.

"But that wasn't kind, either, though you meant it to be so," cried Master Sunshine; "Tim is too young a dog to have so much meat at one time. He needs to have his meals regularly, just like you and me. Too much fresh meat will make him very cross. Perhaps that is part of the reason why he snaps at you."

Tommy was much interested. "I wonder why I never knew that before?" he cried. "After this I will see about his meals myself. I always thought that if you gave a dog a bone now and then he would get along all right."

By this time Master Sunshine was busy with Tim, propping him on his hind legs, and rewarding him each time he held himself erect for a second with a kind word or a pat on the head; and when at last Tim balanced himself for a whole half-minute, his teacher flew to the kitchen for a lump of sugar, which the dog crunched with great enjoyment between his sharp white teeth.

It was quite dark before they noticed how the time was going. The clock was just striking six when Almira Jane put her head in at the dining-room door.

"Mrs. Dane is calling for Tommy," she announced; "and before he goes I must give you each a bit of lunch." And whipping open the oven door with a corner of her apron, she drew out a couple of puffy apple turnovers, all fragrant with cinnamon and gummy with sugar, and sizzling with hot apple-juice. Tommy glanced slyly at her as he bit into his dainty.

"Your Almira Jane has nice ways, even if her eyes are sharp," he said to Master Sunshine as he bade him good-by.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUNDAY WITH FATHER.

WHAT a welcome day Sunday was to Master Sunshine!

To be sure he did not always enjoy going to church, for sometimes the sermon seemed long and tiresome; but there was always the singing to look forward to, and the breaking up of the congregation after the benediction had been said. It was always so pleasant then, for the ladies in their pretty gowns and the men in their black Sunday coats exchanged kindly greetings with one another; and Master Sunshine, in his best blue blouse, with golden anchors embroidered on the shoulders, would follow sedately with his family, and shake hands with the minister, and nod to his boy and girl acquaintances in a very grown-up manner.

Though there were many things about the service that he could not understand, yet it always pleased him to think that so many people had

come together to do honor to God. It seemed so like the Old Testament times, when the people went up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

Sunday-school took up another hour of the day, and the lessons there were always easy to understand. Miss Bell, his young teacher, had always pictures to show them of the places they read about; and there were texts and hymns to recite, and the class missionary box to put pennies in.

But what Master Sunshine looked forward to most of all was the Sunday afternoon walk with his father. Usually they would ramble off to the woods or to some quiet by-road, and talk over all the doings of the week. And if Master Sunshine had done anything that was mean or selfish, he was sure to tell about it then.

"Any boy can be good on Sunday, when his father is with him," explained Master Sunshine; "it's on the week-days, when there isn't a man round, that he is most apt to get into trouble. And I tell you the worst about me, father, so you won't think I'm a better boy than I really am."

It was always so comforting to talk things over, even if he had been doing wrong; for he was always sure of understanding and sympathy and good advice.

"I often wish every boy and his father were chums like us," he said once. "Now, when Tommy Dane gets in trouble, he is always afraid to go to his father, and his mother is too busy to be bothered; so he just has to go to some of the school-boys. Of course, they don't know much better than he does; and their advice is just as apt as not to be wrong, and poor Tommy finds himself in worse trouble than ever.

"Only last week he burst the class foot-ball by standing on it, and the boys said he must buy another. He had no money; but they told him to sell something of his own, and use the money to buy another ball. So he sent the silver mug that his aunt gave him when he was a baby, up to town, and it sold for enough to buy a new ball. Then the teacher wanted to know how it was that the boys happened to have so much money, and Mrs. Dane missed the silver mug. Mr. Dane came to the school and took Tommy home, and he was, oh, so angry with him! He said, 'he was disgraced because his son was a thief,'" and Master Sunshine's tone grew very indignant.

"You see, father, that if Tommy had only gone to some one like you at the first, there would have been no trouble at all."

"And what do you think I would have advised in such a case?" asked Mr. Norton, much interested in the little tale.

Master Sunshine looked at him wonderingly.

"Why, father," he said, "don't you remember about me breaking the great pane of glass in the schoolhouse window? You lent me the money to pay for having it put in, and I had to give you my allowance for ever so long until I made it all up."

"But would Tommy's father have done as much for him?" questioned Mr. Norton.

"If they were chums like you and me I am sure he would," answered Master Sunshine promptly.

"And do you think Tommy did right to sell his mug?" asked Mr. Norton, much interested as to what his son would say.

"The mug was his own, so I don't think it was stealing to take it," said Master Sunshine slowly; "but of course it was not right for him to take it away without letting his people know. There are lots of things in our house that were given to me, and are mine to use and have; but they are not mine to sell and give away like my toys and tops. You never told me so, but I always knew there were two ways of owning things."

"We have no flowers for mother yet," said Mr. Norton, dismissing the subject as he rose from the rock on which they had been resting. "I wonder what we can find for her to-day."

How well they knew where to look, and how many happy exclamations came from Master Sunshine as they discovered a clump of ferns just unfolding from the green balls in which Dame Nature had securely packed them.

In a marshy spot, a host of white violets sent up their dainty perfume; and close by the bed of a tiny brook, a scarlet trilium showed its velvety petals. A sunny hillside was covered with deep purple violets, while under the roadside there were trails of winter-berry vines still green and fresh in spite of the snows that had lain on them; and here and there were the satiny blossoms of the glossy-leaved pigeon-berry.

A pair of keel-tailed blackbirds were building in a tall tree overhead; and the sweet, clear notes of one of them delighted Master Sunshine until he heard the mate answering back with a harsh, scraping noise not unlike a dull saw making its way through a log of knotted wood. A robin gave a mellow chirp; and the Peabody bird was filling the air with its sweet, sad strain.

It was always very hard to leave the woods and fields at such times. They were so full of life and brightness, and there always seemed a special Sunday calm about.

But there were the home people to consider. Lucy would be awake now from her afternoon nap, and would be longing for her romp with her "fazzer man;" and mother would be so delighted with her flowers, and Master Sunshine would be needed to help arrange them; while Almira Jane was sure to be wondering what was keeping "the folks" so late. The Sunday tea would be ready for them too — and a specially good tea it always was. There would be slices of cold meat spread on a platter of parsley; and the thinnest slices of bread-and-butter on the best bread-plates, and frosted cake; and, most likely, peach or strawberry preserves from the jam-cupboard.

Almira Jane was sure to be in good humor too; for there was little work to do on Sunday, and she seldom got a chance to be "nervous" on the day of rest, and like as not Jacob would walk home with her after evening church; while in the cosey sitting-room mother would play on the piano, and Master Sunshine and his father would join in singing their favorite hymns.

CHAPTER V.

BEING A HERO.

"THERE'LL be no rain to-day," said Almira Jane as Master Sunshine slipped off gayly to school next morning. "Your geese are sure to be good weather-prophets, and I notice that they are dressing their feathers and diving comfortably in the little duck-pond."

"And what would they be doing if it were going to rain?" inquired Master Sunshine.

"Geese always get noisy and fidgety before storms," answered Almira Jane. "That was partly what was the matter with the Wanderer and his Wife the day you brought them here. They were doing their best to tell you that there was trouble in the air."

"There is a great lot of sense, after all, even in creatures that people think are foolish," thought Master Sunshine to himself as he set off. Then he turned to wave his hand to his mother, who

threw a kiss at him from an upper window as he disappeared down the road.

Tommy and he strolled along, swinging their school satchels as they went. Presently a sound came to them on the still, morning air, something like a frightened yet angry sob, then a noise as of distant laughter.

"I wonder what the boys are up to to-day," said Tommy, with a lively look of interest.

Master Sunshine said nothing, but broke from a walk into a smart run. He was just a bit afraid that his friend, the half-witted boy, was in trouble.

Sure enough! when they had turned the sharp bend in the road, they came to the scene of the mischief. And then, somehow, all Master Sunshine's smiles vanished, and a sad, troubled expression fell on his face.

A group of schoolboys were teasing Billy Butler, by calling him mocking names, and even by throwing balls of soft mud at him; while poor Billy was growing white with rage and was gesticulating wildly.

It was not the first time that the schoolboys had made a butt of poor Billy; and Master Sunshine wished, oh, so much! that he were not quite so young and small. He was sure that

these big boys would not stop their rude play for him.

Tommy was by his side now, and the boys were calling to them to join the crowd. Tommy looked rather undecided. He knew well enough that the boys were doing wrong, but he feared they would laugh at him unless he took part too; but Master Sunshine could not stand the sight.

"Come, Dick, make the boys stop teasing Billy," cried he, going up to the big boy who was leading in the rude sport. "He has never done you any harm."

Dick looked angrily around. "Listen to bow-legged Norton," he answered rudely.

"Run along," jeered another; "you better go and play with the a-b-c boys at the schoolhouse."

Master Sunshine could not bear to be teased; but neither had he the heart to turn away when Billy's eyes were following him so piteously. His mind was quite made up now, and his temper was rising fast.

"If you can do without me, you can do without Billy too," he said firmly, making his way through the group. "You can call me any names you like, and throw mud if you want to;

but I'm not going to leave Billy till he can go safely home."

The boys looked at one another in amazement. Here was Fred Norton dictating to them what they should and should not do, — a little chap who had scarcely been a year at school.

For a moment they were too surprised to make any objection; and Master Sunshine had actually elbowed his way through the crowd, and, with Billy by the hand, was making his way back towards home before they realized what was happening.

Then a rude lad threw a great handful of mud that spattered on Master Sunshine's back, and another cried, "Look at his bow-legs."

Master Sunshine looked back at his tormentors, for the taunt was harder to bear than the mud itself. The boys were quick to see this, and a half dozen of them at once joined in the teasing chorus: "Did you ever see such legs? Before I'd have crooked legs like that?"

And then his first tormentor would set in with the taunt of "Bow-legged Norton! bow-legged Norton!"

But somehow the fun was quite gone out of it now. A number of the better-minded boys had

left the group, and were walking quietly along. Tommy was talking vigorously to them.

"Fred Norton is all right," he exclaimed; "he's as manly and honest as he can be. He can't bear to see anything ill-treated, not even a dog; and it is just like him to take Billy's part."

"He made me feel small somehow," said Ralph, the largest boy of all. "I suppose I could have stopped the row if I'd thought, but I was afraid the fellows would be angry at me for spoiling their sport. I'll not let them tease him any more, though;" and at a sharp word from him the boys ceased their rude fun.

Master Sunshine was quite late for school that morning, and when he did arrive he was so flushed in the face, and so muddy in his dress, that Mr. Sinclair the teacher guessed that something was amiss; and a few quiet questions at recess brought out part of the story from Tommy, who was but too delighted to sing his friend's praises.

That afternoon when lessons were over, Mr. Sinclair gathered his pupils about him. "Boys," he said, "something that happened to-day makes me afraid that some of you do not know what manliness means; and, if there is a boy among you who does not wish to grow into a manly

man, I would like him to leave the schoolroom now."

Tommy Dane turned around and looked very hard at Dick, who had been the chief of Billy's persecutors; but the boy, though looking very shame-faced, made no effort to move.

"Some of you," continued the master, "have been making Billy Butler very unhappy. Do you think the boy has too much pleasure in his life?"

Every boy there made a picture to himself of Billy's life, and wondered what the master could mean. Billy's home was the worst in the village, his parents were often unkind to him, his clothes were always in rags, he had no friends to play with, no one ever thought of asking him to a party or a picnic or even to play quietly in the back yard. He had never even had a chum.

The teacher read their thoughts very easily. "Then," said he, "if he has no pleasures, why do you not try giving him a few instead of making his life a burden. A manly boy tries to do what good he can to his fellow-creatures, and it seems that the manliest boy among you is one of the youngest pupils."

The boys looked at Master Sunshine as he spoke, for they knew that his words could have

but one meaning. Some of them smiled as they did so; but Dick looked away again quickly, as if there was something in the sight that he could not bear.

Master Sunshine was sound asleep. His head, all a glitter with its yellow curls, was cradled on his arm. There were bits of the dried mud still clinging to the back of his coat. Even the boys who smiled were deeply touched. They remembered then what a very little boy he was, and they did not wonder that the excitement of the morning and the work of the day had quite exhausted him.

There was something like a tear in Dick's hard gray eyes.

"Boys," continued the teacher, "tell me what is your idea of a hero."

"A man who does what is right whether he likes to or not," said Ralph, who was feeling much ashamed of his share in the morning's doings.

"A man who defends the weak," said Tommy proudly. The teacher nodded.

"You are both right," said he; "and I hope from this out to have not one, but a whole roomful of heroes."

When the breaking-up of school aroused Master

Sunshine, he rubbed his eyes open and stared about wonderingly. He could not think what had made him do such a silly thing as to go to sleep in school.

The boys crowded around him as he said good-by to Mr. Sinclair and started for home. Tommy grabbed his books, another lad gave him a little penknife with a tortoise-shell handle, and a third offered him a great, shiny, winter apple.

These delicate attentions were so unexpected that Master Sunshine was quite bewildered; and he was even more puzzled and perhaps a little frightened, when Dick caught him up upon his shoulder, and carried him home in state.

It was all so new and so unexpected, and he was so tired, that he did not ask why it was that the boys, led by Mr. Sinclair, gave three rousing cheers for the "hero of Hill-top school" just as he and his bearer went out of the school gate.

He half dozed again, even on his high perch; and it was not until the shrill voices of the Wanderer and his Wife warned him, that he realized that he was home at last and that another rainstorm was drawing near.

CHAPTER VI.

KIND DEEDS.

ON Friday afternoons Mr. Sinclair usually gave his pupils a very pleasant hour just before closing. Of late he had been reading aloud "Beautiful Joe," and all had been interested in the story of the intelligent dog.

Tommy Dane listened intently to every word, and was quick to put in practice every kind suggestion; while Master Sunshine smiled his approval of the familiar tale, for his own copy of the book was much thumbed from constant reading. He felt very happy to think that so many boys who had pets were learning how to take care of them properly. But he was quite as surprised as the rest of the lads when, at the close of the reading that week, Mr. Sinclair leaned over his desk and said, "Boys, I am not going to read to you next Friday afternoon."

A little murmur of disappointment ran around

the room. "Instead," he continued, smiling down at their troubled faces, "I want you to entertain me. The book we have been reading teaches us kindness to animals, and I should like to hear from each one of you of some thoughtful act that has made the lives of the dependent creatures about you a little happier."

"I know plenty of people who drive their horses too hard, and half starve them into the bargain," interrupted one of the boys.

Mr. Sinclair raised his hand. "I am sorry to say that I know of a few such people myself," he answered; "but we are not talking about them now. There are many people who are kind to their four-legged servants and pets, and I want you to learn by their example. Each one is to tell in his own words of some kind deed that he has a personal knowledge of, and after that we will see what is to be done."

You can imagine how busy the boys were all that week. They asked questions by the thousands of all their friends. They prowled about barns and henneries and rabbit hutches until the people in the village woke up to the idea that the boys of Hill-top school were taking a lively interest in the welfare of all animals.

"Give my horses an extra ration of oats and rub them down well, Jacob," said Banker Patterson, with a twinkle in his eye. "I wouldn't like to be reported for cruelty to animals, and I notice that young Tommy Dane and that yellow-headed Norton are eying my turnout very curiously." Jacob chuckled over the joke, for he well knew that the banker's horses were the best attended to in the village.

"They say," said Jacob, "that Master Sunshine, as they call that Norton boy, is at the bottom of the whole business;" and thereupon he told the story to his employer of how the brave little fellow had protected Billy Butler.

"A fine boy that and a promising one," said Mr. Patterson cordially; "but surely," he added, with a slight frown, "he did not tell you of it himself?"

"Not he," laughed Jacob; "but Tommy Dane has been full of it ever since; and Almira Jane, the help over at the cottage, has told me too. I guess it is owing to her good sense as much as anything else that he's turned out so well."

And perhaps it was as well that Jacob did not see the merry twinkle in the banker's eye at his

words. It was surprising how much Mr. Patterson knew of what went on in the village.

One thing was sure. None of the boys' pets suffered during that week. They had never thought so much of them before; and presently Friday afternoon came, and Mr. Sinclair, leaning back comfortably in his chair, was asking for their stories.

He began with Master Sunshine, because he was the youngest of all; and the little fellow explained how he had learned during the week that heavy hens like his Cochin Chinas should be given low roosts because it was such an effort for them to lift their unwieldy bodies.

"Mine have all been made low now," he added eagerly; "and Almira Jane says that it is a good common sense-ical idea."

They all smiled a little over the way he brought in Almira Jane's name and her funny word. But they had come to have such respect for the manly little fellow that no one laughed aloud.

Then Tommy told how Jacob had taught him to be kind to a pretty colt which his father was bringing up.

"I always thought it was fun to play with it.

I often teased it just to make it kick out with its front feet," he said; "but I know now that that sort of teasing, though it does not hurt the colt at the time, teaches it the habit of kicking. A kicking horse is almost worse than no horse at all."

"The thing I know about happened last winter," said his seat-mate. "There was plenty of snow and ice about, but nothing for the birds to drink; so my sister used to put a saucer of water on the window-ledge each morning. The birds would come from a long way off to get a sip from it, and they were always glad to pick up a few crumbs she strewed for them."

"Mine is a bird story too," said an observant-looking boy; "but the kindness was done by birds, instead of by people. Last week when a bill-poster was pasting up some advertisements on our barn, a sparrow perched on the edge of the bucket, and got his feet and the tips of his wing-feathers all covered with paste."

"I meant to catch him and try to tame him, but the bill-poster said to wait and see what happened next; and sure enough, two other sparrows came and flew in circles above his head, and chirped to him as if they were talking over

what could be done. At last he managed to loosen his claws from the paste, and to move his wings ever so little. The birds, one on each side of him, helped him to the trough by the side of the road, and he splashed in the water until the paste was quite washed off."

"And what did this very curious sight make you think of?" said Mr. Sinclair, suddenly leaning over his desk, and looking at the lad.

The boy colored deeply as he said, "It made me think of my string of birds' eggs at home, and my collection of birds' nests. I promised myself then that I would never, never do anything to injure birds again. I thought that if they knew enough to be kind to each other I ought to know enough to be kind to them."

It seemed as if there were no end to the good deeds of which the lads had taken note.

One had seen an old man digging burdock-roots from the corner of a sheep-field; and, when he offered his help, had learned how troublesome the burdock-burrs were to all woolly or hairy animals.

Another had much to say of a lamb-creep that had been arranged so as to give the young lambs a fair share of food. The older sheep too often

pushed the young ones aside when feeding-time came, and their owner had built a little fold, into which only the small lambs could enter, where a portion of the food was always placed. All the lambs in his flock were plump and thriving, while in his neighbor's pastures, where the lambs were left to fight for themselves, they were thin, miserable-looking creatures.

Some told of how thoughtful people kept water always where the pet dogs could get it; and others of the care that should be given to canaries and to goldfish; and the happy hour was nearly over when Mr. Norton said, "Now, Dick, you have told us nothing. Before we break up school for to-day I would like to hear what you have to say."

Dick shook his; head but his teacher knew that he had been listening intently to all that went on, and was very hopeful that at last he had found a way to the heart of his scholar.

"Let me tell for him, please," interrupted Master Sunshine. "He's been doing kind things all the week for poor Billy Butler. He dug him a garden last Saturday night, and has filled it with plants from his own garden."

"Ah!" said the teacher, well pleased at the

report. "Dick, I think you have done best of all;" and the boys thumped on the floor with their heavy boots, and banged the covers of the desks, to show their appreciation of the good deed.

CHAPTER VII.

A HAPPY ENDING.

JUST as Mr. Sinclair laid his hand on the bell to give the signal for dismissal, a handsome carriage drove to the door. The boys all stared out of the window at the unusual sight. Banker Patterson was helping a lady to alight, and the lady was none other than Almira Jane. Jacob was smiling down from the driver's seat at the queer couple.

Master Sunshine rubbed his eyes in bewilderment. What could Almira Jane be doing there? and what could be in that great basket that Jacob was handing down to her? It looked very much like the great picnic-basket that hung in the kitchen pantry!

And now it was the banker's turn to be loaded up. Jacob gave him several heavy parcels, and finally jumped from his perch and carrying very carefully an odd-shaped package, led the way to

the school door. Billy Butler was standing not far off. He had no fear of the schoolboys now, and sometimes came to the gate when school was dismissed to nod to each one he knew, and to say the names over in his hoarse voice. Jacob called out to him in a friendly tone, and the boy followed him to the school steps.

Mr. Sinclair was as much surprised as his pupils at the arrival of his visitors; but he hastily gave them seats, and was about to call for classes again, when Mr. Patterson said in his big round voice, —

"Young people, I have not come here to examine your progress in your studies, but to tell you how delighted I am with the work you have been at this week. I have never felt so proud of the Hill-top schoolboys before, and I want to ask you to keep on as you have begun.

"I'm afraid I have not always been as thoughtful for my animal friends as I could wish; but, watching a little neighbor of mine whose pets require a great deal of care, and whose master is devoted to them, has made me think a little more of the matter."

Master Sunshine smiled over at Tommy as much as to say, "Do you hear him praising

you?" for the little fellow did not even dream that it was his love for his pets and his brave conduct towards Billy Butler which had brought about this visit.

"If you boys," continued the banker, "will study the needs of all the animals about us, and keep on talking about all the kind deeds you learn of, we shall soon have a model village, where every horse and cow, and lamb and dog and cat, will be comfortably looked after.

"I have heard that your good teacher, Mr. Sinclair, has been wishing for a school library for you," he continued, "so I have to-day brought my contribution towards it." And as the banker spoke he untied the great bundles of handsomely bound natural history books enriched with many beautiful colored pictures, and a number of volumes of stories of animals.

"I am sure," he added, "that the more you know about our animal friends the more interested you will be in their welfare. I have learned with a great deal of interest that one of you is planning to erect a drinking-fountain in the village when he is a man. Now, suppose, instead of waiting till that somewhat distant day, that we make a bargain. If you will endeavor

for a whole year to make the lives of all helpless creatures happy, I will for my part promise to put up a fountain where men and horses and dogs and birds may have a refreshing drink. But remember, I will not do this until I am sure that you have done your part faithfully. This is a miniature copy of the fountain I am willing to erect."

At a word from him Jacob quickly threw the covering from the package which he had placed on the desk, and the boys exclaimed with delight at the beautiful model of a fountain which was displayed.

They surrounded it in an instant, and were quick to admire every detail — the great horse with his shaggy mane on top, the tiny mug hung at the faucets for wayfarers, the wide trough for horses and cows, and the four little basins for dogs and birds.

"This is the model of the fountain you are to earn," said their new friend pleasantly. "You may keep it in your schoolroom as a reminder."

Just didn't these boys cheer. The schoolhouse fairly shook with the noise and tumult they made. They gathered like bees about their friend to promise him that they would earn the

fountain faithfully, and to thank him a dozen times over for the beautiful books.

At this, Almira Jane, who had been listening with a happy smile to the little speech, suddenly threw off the cover of her basket; and there, lying on white napkins, were layers of the crispest doughnuts and dozens of molasses cookies of her most delicious make.

The boys needed no invitation to fall to, for the sight of the dainties was quite enough; and Dick took care that Billy, whose hungry eyes were looking in at the door, should have a share as well.

A few minutes later all the fun was over. Almira Jane, waving her empty basket to rid it of the crumbs, climbed into the carriage; and at Mr. Patterson's request Master Sunshine and Tommy accepted his place, while he remained for a quiet talk with Mr. Sinclair. The rest of the boys sauntered happily home, with a pleasant word each for Billy, who by this time was so amazed at the good fortune that had befallen him that he could find no words in which to express his feelings.

But that was not all, I can tell you. The boys were full of the new idea; and strange as it

may seem, the more kind things they saw done, the more they were anxious to do themselves, and nearly all the objectionable pastimes they had formerly engaged in were laid aside. No one ever went fishing just for the pleasure of throwing the panting, struggling fish on the grass; no one ever tormented frogs, or pulled the wings off the poor flies nowadays.

The boys of the Hill-top school had taken all living things under their protection, and you may be sure that they put down all kinds of thoughtless cruelty.

It was just a year from the day on which they made their bargain with Mr. Patterson that the fountain was set up. It was shrouded in a great flag until it should be finally unveiled.

It was a great day in the village, I can tell you. Never before had the Hill-top schoolboys been so looked up to. The fountain was their gift to the village. They had earned it faithfully and well. They were all there, drawn up in a circle about the fountain, — Ralph and Dick and Tommy and Master Sunshine, and all the other pupils of the school. Close by were gathered their relatives and friends; for the formal unveiling was felt to be a most important matter, and

the whole village had turned out to witness the ceremony.

Mrs. Norton was looking very pleased and happy over some words that Mr. Patterson said quietly in her ear, while Lucy, now a baby no longer, cried out from her post on her father's shoulder, "It's dee Suns'ine's fountain, it's dee Suns'ine's fountain;" and Almira Jane dressed in her best bib and tucker, and Jacob dressed in his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes, looked across at each other very kindly.

Presently Mr. Patterson in a few words told of the events that had led to the erection of the fountain, and Mr. Sinclair called on Master Frederick Norton to pull down the great flag that veiled the fountain from view. A cry of admiration went up from the crowd as the fountain, a most beautiful work of art, burst on their view.

At a second signal from Mr. Sinclair, plenteous streams of sparkling water gushed into the troughs and basins, while the boys of the Hill-top school burst into a song which their teacher had especially prepared for the occasion.

Gyp and Tim meantime, who had followed their young masters from home, suddenly realized what all the disturbance was about, and

with one accord they made their way through the crowd, and began to lap up water from the dog-basins with as little concern as if they had been used to these luxuries all their lives.

Master Sunshine's eyes were with his pet, you may be sure; and suddenly he stopped singing right in the middle of a verse, and gazed in wonder at the words which were carved low down at the base of the fountain, "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink."

"How could Mr. Patterson know the very text I liked best of all?" he said to himself.

And he pondered over it all that day. In the evening, after he had tended to his Cochin Chinas and captured the Guinea hens in the very act of stealing away, and had seen that the Wanderer and his Wife were under shelter, a light suddenly broke on him.

"O Almira Jane, I believe it was you who told!" he exclaimed as he burst into the kitchen; and although she never would admit it, I think she did.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0002065328O